

**Food Security Questions
for Behavior Checklist Additional Questions
Submitted by National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)**

This document contains additional questions to the Behavior Checklist Master Question Set submitted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Some background information on the questions is included.

Staff at NCHS, FNS, and Abt Associates, Inc. have worked to develop a six-item subscale that may be used in place of the preferred 18-question scale (whenever space and time are of great concern). The group first had to determine if six questions could correctly classify most households into the same food security/hunger categories as did the 18-item scale. Though the set of 18 questions is meant to classify people into four categories: (1) food secure, (2) food insecure but short of hunger, (3) food insecure with moderate hunger, and (4) food insecure with severe hunger, using any set of 6 questions would require the collapse of the two most severe categories (moderate and severe hunger) into one category, food security with any hunger. The group went through a logical process to decide which questions from the set of 18, ought to be discarded. In the end, one subscale emerged as the best global scale for use in households with and without children. When this six-item scale is compared with the 18-question scale, it was found that 97% of all households in the 1995 CPS sample would be correctly classified with the shorter scale. One additional scale tested slightly better than the one selected if used only in households with children. However, at this time, the goal of the process has been to devise a universal surveillance instrument that can be used in households with and without children.

The 6-question set follows:

<u>Question ID</u>	<u>Question</u>
FNS124	In the last 12 months, since (DATE), did you (or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food? [Yes, No or Don't Know]
FNS125	How often did this happen--almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months? [1] Almost Every Month [2] Some Months but not every month [3] Only 1 or 2 Months [0] Don't Know
FNS132	In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food? [Yes, No or Don't Know]
FNS135	In the last 12 months, since (DATE), were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food? [Yes, No or Don't Know]

Now, I'm going to read you two statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was **OFTEN**, **SOMETIMES**, or **NEVER TRUE** for you (or other members of your household) in the last 12 months.

FNS154 The first statement is "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?

FNS 155 "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?

In households with children, an optional 7th question may be asked. In households without children, only 6 questions are asked.

FNS157 (My/Our child was/The children were) not eating enough because (I/we) just couldn't afford enough food. Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

The first six questions represent work in progress. They were presented to the Working Group on Welfare Reform, Nutrition, and Data Needs (a working group of the Interagency Board for Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research) with the hope that they would generate a discussion, and eventually, agreement by member organizations to adopt a subscale for use when the preferred 18-item scale cannot be used because of time and/or space constraints. The full discussion has not taken place, so there is no guarantee that the exact set of questions will not be changing. [Karil Bialostosky, February, 1998]

SCORING: Total the number of affirmative responses. (1 and 2 are considered affirmative responses to Questions 25, 54 and 55.) Two or more affirmatives indicate food insecurity; five or more affirmatives indicates hunger.

CLASSIFICATION ABILITY: Compared with classification using the full 18-item scale, 97.7% of all households sampled for the April 1995 CPS would be classified correctly with this short form. 87.2% of households with at least one affirmative answer on the 18-item scale would also be classified correctly. Kappa statistics further suggest excellent agreement between the two scales (0.88 for all households, 0.80 for households with at least 1 affirmative answer.)

Adapted with permission from: Short form of the 12-month Food Security Scale, developed by NCHS. Contact people are Stephen Blumberg, Marcie Cyanamon, and Karil Bialostosky. January 1998. Please do not cite or quote without permission.